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THE ART AMATEUR.

PUVIS DE CHAVANNES.

(CONCLUDED.)

THE two compositions at Marseilles are also staircase decorations. "Marseilles, the Greek Colony," shows buildings in process of construction, stone-cutters and masons at work; in the foreground, on the terrace of a newly built house, young girls are spinning wool and examining woven stuffs; in the distance the olive



PUVIS DE CHAVANNES.

culture is in progress. The companion picture, "Marseilles, the Gate of the Orient," is a sea-piece; a ship, laden with merchandise from the East, manned by dark-skinned sailors, is sailing toward the port of Marseilles, which is faintly indicated in the distance.

The full titles of the Poitiers subjects are as follows: "The Triumphal Reception of Charles Martel, Conqueror of the Saracens, by the Clergy and People of Poitiers, at the Gate of the City," and "Saint Radegonde in retreat at the Convent of the Holy Cross at Poitiers, gives hospitality to Poets and protects literature against the barbarism of her age." In the first subject, the bishop and clergy of Poitiers are drawn up at the left, before the gate of the city. Behind them the notables and the people shout a welcome to the mailed and helmeted chevaliers who advance from the right. At their head, Charles Martel lifts up, in sign of friendship, his terrible battle-axe. In the foreground is a group of prisoners, who are being fed by the women of the town. The other subject is opposed to this in sentiment and treatment. It is an interior. Saint Radegonde is seated in the midst of a group of poets and men of learning. A troubadour improvises a ballad in the foreground. In the court, without, is a laurel-tree growing beside a fountain. Among the group of poets, De Chavannes has placed his friend Gautier, and he has also introduced a portrait of himself in the group before the Queen.

"The Childhood of Saint Genevieve" is the painter's principal work. It occupies all the right wall of the Pantheon, on entering. The columns built into the wall divide it into four parts. The subject of the composition is indicated by the inscription, placed underneath, as follows: "In the year 429 Saint Germain of Auxerrois and Saint Loup, on their way to England to combat the heresy of the Pelagians, arrive in the neighborhood of Nauterre, where, among the crowd come to meet them,

Saint Germain distinguishes a child whose glorious future he predicts." The central panel contains the principal personages, the two saints, the little Genevieve and her parents. In the panel to the left are boatmen and their passengers embarking on the Seine, and in the distance some men bring a sick person out of a cabin to receive the blessing of the two bishops. The other panel shows, near a cabin, a woman milking a cow, and other peasants, while the Seine continues its course in the background through wooded banks and hills, which lose themselves in a mysterious distance. The fourth panel contains a separate subject, the youthful Saint Genevieve in prayer at the foot of a tree, to the trunk of which she has attached a rude cross. Some peasants look on reverently. A frieze, likewise divided into four panels, runs along over the principal subjects. Above the last-mentioned picture are the cardinal virtues, Faith, Hope and Charity, watching over the cradle of the little Saint Genevieve. The three other panels are filled by a series of the legendary saints of France, all more than life size and very varied in attitude and physiognomy. St. Firmin of Amiens is shown restoring sight to a blind boy; St. Martha, of Provence, is taming the redoubtable "Tarasque," from which monster the native town of Alphonse Daudet's hero takes its name—Tarascon. All are on a gold ground, which harmonizes excellently with the pale tones of the background in the principal compositions.

The painting of the Sorbonne is an allegory, pure and simple, in which theology, science and law are symbolized by several groups of figures disposed in the shadow of a grove. In the distance the wood sweeps around in a vast semi-circle toward the horizon, giving a very impressive unity to the composition.

All of these works have a certain family likeness, so to speak, which comes in part from their peculiar technique. They remind one somewhat of fresco paintings; but their tones are more vibrating, less monotonous. As regards drawing and composition, there are as few lines as possible, and each line is made to tell as much as possible. He is fond of landscapes in which the rocks lie horizontally and the trees grow perpendicularly—the limestone rocks and the poplars of the south of France. Curves are sparingly introduced, a small stream winds through the foreground, and above and beyond all spreads an immense pale sky. More than one critic has objected to this pale and gray scheme of color. Paul Mantz, for example, says, apropos of the "Bois Sacré," that Mr. de Chavannes does not preoccupy himself much

These "paleurs systématiques" of his are worth all the blue and gold and crimson of certain other painters. They have also been reproached with being allegorical; but no one has charged them with being enigmatical. The least instructed can understand them without hunt-

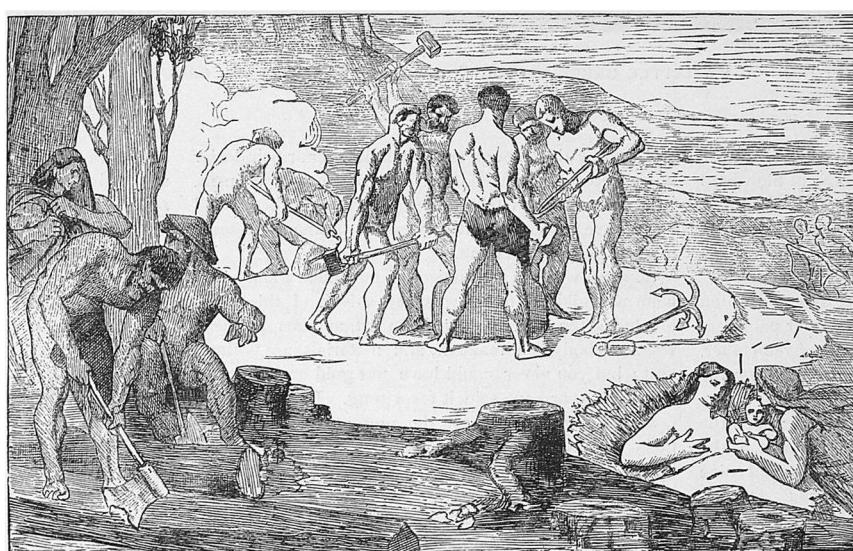


"THE REAPER'S SLEEP." BY PUVIS DE CHAVANNES.

ing through a classical dictionary for the meaning of symbols and attributes. The pose, the movement of the figures, the sentiment of the landscape, the color, speak, as they should, themselves. Their easily comprehensible character is due in part to the wilful banishment of all that might confuse the main theme. It is doubtless the case that the painter's predilection for representing primitive and classical times not only enables him to introduce the nude at pleasure, but keeps his simplicity free from any hint of the vulgar, and in both ways conduces to clearness of thought and expression. Such considerations have always been of weight with decorative painters who understand the requirements of their particular branch of art. But they are seldom so well understood as by Puvis de Chavannes.

One of the most recent works of the artist is "La Fileuse," a full-length figure of a girl, partly draped, holding a distaff. This exquisitely arranged picture was painted specially for Mr. Durand-Ruel and is not to be exhibited. The artist is at present engaged upon an important work for the same private collection, the panels of a fourfold screen that had been prepared for decoration to be carried out by the late John Lewis Brown. At his death—before any beginning had been made—the commission was undertaken by Puvis de Chavannes. He declines to divulge the subject of this screen decoration until he has completed it.

ROGER RIORDAN.



"WORK." BY PUVIS DE CHAVANNES.

about color. "He has been rather slow to feel that he might find in the resources of the palette a means for the expression of his thought." But it is rather the critic who has been slow to see that De Chavannes is and has been from the first an extremely delicate colorist.

SURPRISE is expressed by some of the critics that the New York representatives of Boussod, Valadon & Co. should have so far departed from the Chauvinist traditions of the house as to import pictures by Ludwig Knaus. They forget that Knaus studied for eight years in Paris and is more French than German in his art.